



Politics in the Age of the iPod

Posted by [Pierluigi Oliverio](#) on Monday, July 20, 2009

I was recently downloading classic songs on my iTunes from the late '70s, two of which were Bob Welch's "Ebony Eyes," and Player's "Baby Come Back." iTunes is great because I can choose the specific songs I like rather than having to purchase the entire album.

Those of us who are a certain age probably remember when we had to buy the whole record/cassette/8-track to listen to that one song we really liked. In fact, back in the day, when these gadgets were the only ways music was shared, there was the "A" side and "B" side—with the A side home to the selections that were thought to be the top hits. So we took the good songs with the bad; we did not have the luxury of picking and choosing what we liked and did not like.

While downloading my songs, I was thinking about how we choose our politicians. Unfortunately, we don't get to pick politicians the way we do music, although I bet most of us would like to. It would be great to choose the top characteristics of the best candidates in a race and then take those skill sets and create our own perfect politician. However, when it comes to picking our elected officials, we are forced to do it the old fashioned way, we elect the whole package—we must purchase the whole album and then concentrate on the good parts.

Interestingly enough, however, sometimes the B side of an album produced the top hits, to everyone's surprise. Likewise, sometimes when we vote for candidates, their qualities that weren't considered great may turn out to become the things we like most about them. Conversely, we may have thought that the one song we bought the whole album for was awesome, but then, after purchasing the album, that one song soon gets on our nerves and we are left wondering what we liked about it in the first place.

At least when we bought an entire album, we knew what we were getting...its not like the album changed it's tune after we purchased it...unlike some elected officials do once they are elected.

We live in a world where we have many choices. We get to choose what we really like in most things and leave the rest. However, at the same time, we have to remind ourselves to balance the freedom to choose when it comes to judging elected officials. Do we expect too much from elected officials or do elected officials describe themselves unrealistically to lead us believe they can do miracles? Or both?

Have you been let down when the politician you wanted to win didn't, only to be pleasantly surprised with the person who did win? Have you supported a politician who won, only to be let down?

On another note, last week on this blog it was asked: Do San Jose City Council members get benefits when they retire? The short answer is: No. After serving eight years (two four-year terms maximum) council members are not eligible for lifetime medical. Councilmembers are allowed to put a portion of their paycheck into a 457 plan, which is like a 401K or 403B plan. They get to keep this when they leave, much like anyone else in the private sector does when switching jobs.

However, members of the County Board of Supervisors do receive lifetime medical once they finish their 12 years (three four year terms maximum) and make approximately \$50K more than San Jose city council members. Members of Congress also receive lifetime medical. I do not know about our state legislature.

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